

DATE: November 2, 2018

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Kinsey O'Shea, AICP, Town Planner KO

RE: RZN18-0008/ORD 1872- Request to rezone 4.215 acres from R-5 Transitional Residential zoning district to PR Planned Residential zoning district at 1222 Patrick Henry Drive (Tax Map No. 196-A 5) by Justin Boyle of Green Valley Builders, Inc. (applicant) for Gary W. Case of Acme Holdings LLC (property owner).

At the October 16, 2018 Planning Commission work session, the Town Engineering staff gave an update to the Planning Commission regarding potential sanitary sewer upgrades necessitated by the proposed development. The staff memo dated October 12, 2018 noted that while additional language was added to the application regarding the developer's commitment to installing such sewer upgrades, this commitment should be made in the form of a proffer.

In response, the applicant has been working with Town staff to develop a proffer to address this need. No proffer has been submitted to date, but the applicant has indicated that a proffer statement will be available prior to the Planning Commission Public Hearing on November 6, 2018.

Additionally, letters from two citizens in reference to this project are attached.

ATTACHMENTS

Lenwood Heath Letter
Erin Stenger Letter

301 Seminole Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 392-6672

November 1, 2018

Planning Commission and Town Council
Town of Blacksburg
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Re: 1222 Patrick Henry Drive

Dear members of the Planning Commission and Town Council,

On behalf of my wife, Deanie Harris Heath, and myself, we wish to express our concern about the proposed development of a four-story apartment complex at 1222 Patrick Henry Drive. This large development is extremely close to the Shenandoah neighborhood, much closer than any other development. One need only visit the property and walk through to see how close the development would be to our back fence and the town-maintained path that is behind it.

Along with our neighbors on Seminole drive whose property backs onto the path, we maintain a substantial fence as a partial buffer. These fences are necessary to prevent more crime occurring in the area at the hands of late-night wandering college students from nearby apartment complexes. A few years ago, the fence of our immediate neighbor was attacked by a crowd and partially knocked down. When he went out to investigate and confront the crowd, he was punched. No one was caught.

Our fence has been painted with obscene graffiti. A garbage can full of garbage was thrown over our fence into our back yard. It is a regular weekend occurrence for there to be beer cans in our back yard.

The worst possible outcome would be a connector between the proposed development and the existing path, right behind our fence. This will increase the number and size of late-night crowds on the path significantly. And, **it will inevitably increase the amount of crime committed against residents of the Shenandoah neighborhood.** In any case, a wall or

fence between the development and the neighborhood is essential to reduce crime.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our thoughts.

Thank you.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lenwood S. Heath". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'L' and 'H'.

Lenwood S. Heath

October 21, 2018

Dear members of the Planning Commission and Town Council,

I am writing to you to describe my growing concerns about the proposed development of a four-story apartment complex at 1222 Patrick Henry Drive.

I have lived in the Shenandoah neighborhood for the past 6 years and love being a part of this strong community. However, I am concerned that the proposed development will drastically impact our quality of life.

Problem 1: I believe the biggest problem with the proposed development by Green Valley Builders is the lack of a thoughtful transition from a High Density apartment complex to a Low Density single family neighborhood. Green Valley Builders is requesting to triple the current zoning. After attending the neighborhood meeting, I was overwhelmed seeing the 4-story building that would be built a stone's throw from where I live. The apartment building would be a football field long (286 ft = 95 yards) of 4 stories of windows that are 20 yards from our neighborhood.



Neither the size nor the architecture of the proposed building feel like a transition to the established Shenandoah neighborhood. Even the report from Development Strategies commented that the building will be **“noticeably larger than most nearby structures.”** Considering many of our homes sit lower than the current elevation of the site, this enormous building full of 276 residents will feel even bigger. Whereas on the other side of Patrick Henry Drive, a building of this size might seem more appropriate, the proposed building here does not make sense if you are concerned about the preservation of our neighborhood.

The plan to leave the “natural tree buffer” as an attempt to create a separation is superficial as the trees are immature Bradford pears and the underbrush is not dense in many places along the path. While I appreciate some of the things Green Valley Builders have incorporated in their proposal like an 8 foot fence and 12 foot trees, the scale and density of the proposed development does not protect the integrity our neighborhood and only highlights why this project is wrong for this space.

There has been dissension between members of the planning commission about whether or not to have a connection from the proposed development to the trail. Some say no, some say yes. I think this talking point keeps coming up because it doesn't feel natural to connect this development so closely to this neighborhood. There should be a natural transition between the two communities. The problem is not a fence or a connection to the trail, the problem is the size and feel of this project. **The fact that everyone is not on the same page leads me to believe this is not the right project for this space. If so, it would be obvious to connect the two.**

Problem 2: I am not opposed to growth, but our neighborhood seems to be a casualty to the demand for student housing. The Town needs to balance Virginia Tech's growth with the preservation of the neighborhoods where many permanent residents live. I understand this is certainly not an easy job.

From my perspective, the process to review the Green Valley Builder's proposal feels rushed. To quote Mr. Semones when presenting about the Stadium View project on September 18th: "We want to take the time to do this right." He was referring to that fact that Stadium View had been presented and discussed amongst members of the planning commission over multiple years. Discussions about the neighborhood identity, what differentiated Stadium View to justify the Planned Residential Development zoning, and the precedents being set in reviewing/approving these PRDs (even though most are contrary to the Town's Comprehensive Plan) are questions that take time and input from the community to answer; these concerns are curiously missing from discussions on this development. It would be a shame if Green Valley Builder's project was passed through the same process in a mere three to four months. Why the rush?

Problem 3: With new development, there are always concerns about traffic, parking, light, noise, and in cases with new student housing, vandalism. I understand there will be "growing pains." However, our neighborhood's concerns are valid and will greatly impact our quality of life on a daily basis.

For example, I am discouraged when I walk my son to his soccer game on Saturday morning only to find broken glass and trash littered along the Shenandoah path. This has happened on multiple occasions. Why has the Town not added trashcans along the path for trash or pet waste? Could it concerned the trashcans would be vandalized on a regular basis?

Increased traffic, parking, and using the cul-de-sac as a cut-through are a major concern with the proposed development. My biggest concern is not just someone parking on the road, but flying down the street looking for parking and not seeing my kids playing in the leaf pile in front our house.



Traffic is increasing- especially at the light at Tom's Creek Road and Patrick Henry Drive, within "the corridor." Since the Terrace View project was approved, I have to believe the Town has a plan on how to deal with an additional 1,000 people living and commuting in this area of town. However, I have not seen any long-term plans to mitigate the road issues along Patrick Henry Drive during the meetings about these "corridor" developments.

As Mr. Colley recognized at the planning commission work session on September 18th, I am not just terrified of the implications of having a four-story apartment building in my backyard, I am concerned about how all of these projects will impact our neighborhood.

I appreciate your time and service to our community.

Sincerely,

Erin Stenger
302 Seminole Drive